

How to Request Reasonable Accommodation at the NNSA Service Center

This guide was developed to assist employees and supervisors with a summary of how requests for reasonable accommodation should occur. This guide should be used only as a quick reference. For a complete explanation of the overall process for requesting reasonable accommodation, refer to the Equal Employment Opportunity Commission Guidance. The guide is located <http://www.eeoc.gov/policy/docs/accommodation.html>

- **How must an individual request a reasonable accommodation?**

When an individual decides to request accommodation, the individual or his/her representative must let the employer know that s/he needs an adjustment or change at work for a reason related to a medical condition. To request accommodation, an individual may use “plain English” and need not mention the Rehabilitation Act of 1973, Americans with Disabilities Act or use the phrase “reasonable accommodation.” Requests for reasonable accommodation do not need to be in writing. Individuals may request accommodations in conversation or may use any other mode of communication.

- **When should an individual with a disability request a reasonable accommodation?**

An individual with a disability may request a reasonable accommodation at any time during the application process or during the period of employment. The Rehabilitation Act does not preclude an employee with a disability from requesting a reasonable accommodation because s/he did not ask for one when applying for a job or after receiving a job offer. An individual with a disability should request a reasonable accommodation when s/he knows there is a workplace barrier preventing him/her, due to a disability, from effectively competing for a position, performing a job, or gaining equal access to a benefit of employment. As a practical matter, it may be in an employee’s interest to request a reasonable accommodation before performance suffers or conduct problems occur.

- **What must an employer do after receiving a request for reasonable accommodation?**

The employer and the individual with a disability should **engage in an informal process** to clarify what the individual needs and identify the appropriate reasonable accommodation. The employer may ask the individual relevant questions in order to make an informed decision about the request. This includes asking what type of reasonable accommodation is needed and requesting medical documentation to determine if a disability does in fact exist. Supervisors should be aware that providing reasonable accommodation does not require eliminating essential functions of the position.

- **How quickly must an employer respond to a request for reasonable accommodation?**

An employer should respond expeditiously to a request for reasonable accommodation. If the employer and the individual with a disability need to engage in an interactive process, this too should proceed as quickly as possible. Similarly, the employer should act promptly to provide the reasonable accommodation. Unnecessary delays can result in a violation of the Rehabilitation Act. The request can be denied if the accommodation presents an undue hardship.

Procedures and Contacts for Employees and Supervisors

- Step 1:** The employee makes a reasonable accommodation request, either verbally or in writing, to their supervisor.
- Step 2:** Employee and supervisor meet to clearly identify needs and appropriate reasonable accommodation.
- Step 3:** Contact appropriate organization for support if request requires workplace modification or job restructuring. Contact information is listed at the end of this article.
- Step 4:** Submit a Reasonable Accommodation Request Form to supervisor, with appropriate medical documentation. To request a copy, contact Joanne Stone, (505) 845-5224. This documents the start of the process and clarifies what specific accommodations the employee is requesting, any time sensitivity, and what job functions the employee has difficulty performing. Note: DOE has an interagency agreement with the Department of Defense's Computer/ Electronic Accommodations Program (CAP) to provide assistive/adaptive technology free of charge to DOE-NNSA employees with disabilities.

Contacts:

See next page

Contacts

Reasonable Accommodation Requests/Job Applicants: Joanne Stone, (505) 845-5224, OHCMS

Employee Relations issues related to Reasonable Accommodation: Patricia Thompson, (505) 845-5925, OHCMS

Ergonomics/Furniture/Workplace Modification: Michael Donche, (505) 845-5950, OBS. The ergonomics form can be obtained by accessing the NNSA's Service Center Intranet web link titled SC Facilities/Services, Office Moves/Reconfiguration located at <http://scweb.na.gov/property/spacemove.shtm>

For additional information, refer to the EEOC Reasonable Accommodation website <http://www.eeoc.gov/policy/docs/accommodation.html>

You may also call the NNSA Service Center EEO & Diversity Office at (505) 845-5517.

Legal References: *Rehabilitation Act of 1973, Title VII of the Civil Rights Act of 1964 and the Americans with Disabilities Act.*